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FROM STAFF REPORTS

Blessings in a Backpack Fort Wayne expanded its Summer Feeding Program into Whitley and Kosciusko counties through a collaborative partnership with United Way of Whitley and Kosciusko Counties, Community Foundation of Whitley County, and Parkview Health Foundation.

Together, these organizations have secured funding to ensure that children across both counties continue to have access to food over summer weekends when school meals are unavailable.

Starting last week, the program is expected to distribute 2,934 bags of food throughout the summer, helping bridge the gap for children facing food insecurity during school breaks.

"United Way of Whitley and Kosciusko Counties was honored when the Parkview Foundation, the Community Foundation of Whitley County, and Blessings in a Backpack reached out asking us to put our heads together to create a summer food program in Whitley County. I come from an educational background with 10 years in public schools, so I see and know the need first-hand in our county. I couldn't have asked for better partners to put this opportunity together for the Whitley County children," said Kacey Anderson, director of the

Whitley County United Way office.

Jama Ross, executive director of Blessings in a Backpack Fort Wayne, emphasized that food insecurity extends well beyond urban communities.

"People forget that food insecurity extends far outside city limits," said Ross. "Children in rural areas are often hit especially hard during breaks from school, with devastating consequences. We believe every child deserves the basic human dignity of food, and we are deeply grateful to these funders and partners who have made feeding children a priority."

Food distribution sites for summer 2026 include:

- Miami Village
- 9 & 30 Mini-Storage
- Columbia City Parks Department
- Difference Makers
- Peabody Library
- Community Foundation of Whitley County
- Smith-Green Community Schools
- Blue Lake Building
- Larwill Fire Department
- BABE of Whitley County
- Sugar Creek Donuts
- South Whitley Community Building

This expansion reflects a shared commitment among regional organizations to ensure that no child goes hungry simply because school is out of session, said a news release.

starts today, will be greeted by a fresh-looking Oscar statue, repaired by Samantha Fulk.

"To preserve Oscar, I used a weather-proof sealant over the deep cracks that had formed, then freshened up the paint with brighter shades of his

30 years and has held up surprisingly well in the elements. My main effort was to try and keep moisture out of the areas that have chipped out in the sun and rain. Hopefully this helps him last several more years, as he truly is a staple to the community!"



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Harold Company Performers to present 'Just a Few of Our Friends'

FROM STAFF REPORTS

COLUMBIA CITY — Last year, in The Harold Company Performers' inaugural production of the musical "Curtains," Rosalie Geller's character was killed off in the first 10 minutes.

This year, as she takes the stage in a 12-person ensemble for The Harold Company's concert, "Just a Few of Our Friends," a Stephen Sondheim Revue, she promises the audience will get to see her stick around for the entire show.

"When I was offered an opportunity to be part of the first production of The Harold Company Performers last summer, I immediately said yes. It is such a wonderful endeavor," she said.

While Geller knew her stage time was limited, that didn't stop her from seeing merit and value in the role.

"Even though I would have liked to have been on stage more, my part wasn't written that way, and I also relished the opportunity to sing off-key, on purpose. My character brought humor and the first great twist to the plot, and it was so much fun," she said.

Geller's Whitley County roots, as well as

those within The Harold Company Performers, run deep. Starting at Coesee Elementary School, a K-8 building at the time, Geller worked across the United States and in northeastern Indiana before returning. She led the choral programs at Churubusco High School for 12 years, directing 10 musicals in the district, then taught at Columbia City High School for 10 years, as well as providing leadership for the arts.

"There is such incredible talent and interest in the performing arts throughout Whitley County, and that has spanned generations," she said. "Promoting a career in theater was never the main goal with my students, but being sure there were numerous opportunities in the arts was important, even in smaller schools. I fondly remember having 40 to 60 kids wanting to be involved in productions. That was fantastic."

As she returns to the stage with her former students, their proteges, and some new faces, she does not take her connection to the community, or the late Harold Norman, the theater company's namesake, for granted.

"When I first met Harold, he immediately made it known he would help me as a mentor, guide, and partner. He showed me I could trust him in all components of the process. I was new to directing high school productions as my prior experience was semi-professional, and I was constantly learning from and supported by him," she said.

In talking about the upcoming musical revue, Geller is acutely aware of just how powerful an evening of shared theatrical experience can be for a community.

"I believe Stephen Sondheim is an American treasure. The audience will recognize so many pieces and be drawn in because of the level of professionalism on stage. Creativity is beautiful, and we need it for ourselves to be fulfilled," she said. "Sharing that gift with others is important as well, and attendees will enjoy an incredible performance."

"Just a Few of Our Friends" runs Friday, June 26 and Saturday, June 27 at 7 p.m. at Churubusco High School on the Harold Norman stage. Tickets are on sale now at theharoldcompanyperformers.com for \$10 presale, and will be \$15 the evening of the show at the door.



CASEY SMITH/INDIANA CAPITAL CHRONICLE

Beau Bayh takes a photo with Steuben County delegate Judy Rowe, the Democratic nominee for the House 51 seat in the General Assembly, at the Indiana Democratic Convention on Saturday, in Indianapolis.

Bayh gets SOS nomination

Remainder of the ballot was uncontested

BY CASEY SMITH
indianacapitalchronicle.com

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana Democrats chose Beau Bayh as their secretary of state nominee Saturday, sending the first-time candidate — with one of the state's most recognizable political names — into a race that party leaders see as their best opportunity for a statewide seat in more than a decade.

Bayh defeated challenger Blythe Potter at the Indiana Democratic Convention after

delegates gathered at the Indiana Convention Center to choose the party's nominee for the November election.

Bayh earned 61% of delegate votes — 1,385 votes to Potter's 883, according to convention results. Party officials said 2,269 delegates cast ballots Saturday afternoon, with one blank ballot submitted.

"Hoosiers are ready for something different, something better. They're tired of insider dealing, they're tired of the corruption. That's why I'm going to open an independent audit to root that out on day one," Bayh told reporters after winning the nomination.

"I'm going to be the type of leader in state government

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